

REMARKS

The Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for providing the Office Action having a mailing date of February 4, 2003. In the Office Action, the Examiner states that claim 1 through 20 have been rejected because under 35 USC 103(a) the claims are unpatentable over Burden (US 3,243,568 and referred to as '568) in view of Wada et al. (US 4,208,564 and referred to as '564).

As noted by the Examiner, the '568 Burden patent appears to describe a consumable guide tube having longitudinal channels. However, the '568 Burden patent does NOT disclose a plurality of insulator modules or for that matter any use of insulator modules.

The Examiner has also cited the '564 Wada patent for teaching the use of insulating projections 120 to prevent a short circuit in the weld gap. The insulating projections 120 taught by the Wada '564 patent are disposed ONLY in the plate section 11 of the nozzle structure 10. Furthermore, the insulating projections 120 do NOT melt into the molten flux puddle.

Thus, the Examiner's combination appears to consist of a consumable guide tube having longitudinal channels with insulating projections disposed at the top of the guide tube, wherein the insulating projections do NOT melt into the molten flux puddle.

The Examiner will notice that the claims have been amended to reflect that the insulator modules are disposed *along the length of the elongated strips* that make up the guide tube. Neither the '564 Wada patent or the '568 Burden patent

teach or suggest the use of insulator modules disposed along the entire length of the guide tube.

Additionally, by having insulator modules located along the length of the elongated strips, the insulator modules can contribute flux to the flux puddle while at the same time preventing arcing. The Examiner shall appreciate that during the electroslag process, flux from the flux puddle is depleted. Thus, there are benefits associated with contributing flux (from the insulating modules) to the flux puddle that are NOT suggested by either the '564 Wada patent or the '568 Burden patent.

The amended claims clearly identify the importance of having insulating modules along the length of the guide tube. The amended claim language has been distinguished from the prior art. In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully submitted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Kerr', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael A. Kerr
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